HIGH LIGHTS



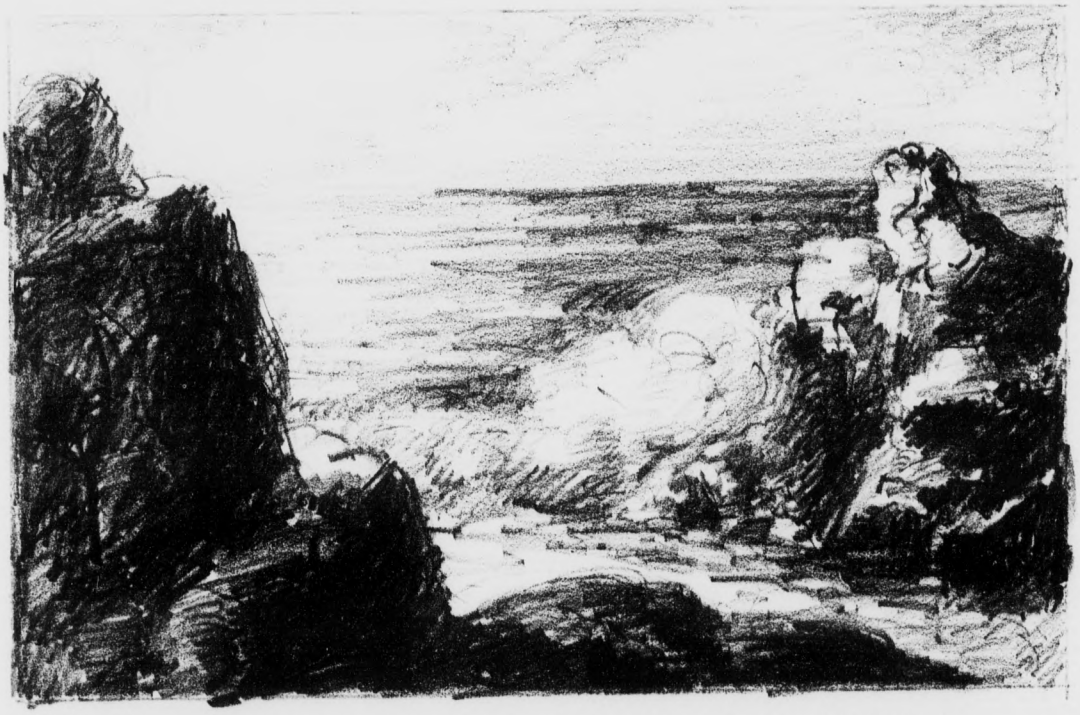
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HIGH LIGHTS

FEBRUARY 1944 Volume 5 Number 2

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HIGH LIGHTS, from the foothills; issued monthly by Sierra Madre Arts Guild at the Wisteria Vine Gardens in Sierra Madre, California.

ROAD TO THE HILL

Janet Cheney

I had a winding road passing by my gate
That called to me early, called to me late:
In the mornings, now: "Come, you must waken;
I'm being urgent; you must be taken
Away down the incline that grows into the valley,
Through the dappled copse where you would dally.
Pick a primrose quickly and one daffodil
And smell the damp loam by the tiny rill
Laughing at you from its running lair,
Seeking to hold you to itself there.
But you must hurry, hurry, only pass by,
To reach the hill over which I lie."

Ah! winning winding road that hurried through the wood
To wind around and sweep around till on that hill I stood
Where the fresh strong breeze blew and all the earth was dear,
Spread about and intimate, Love drawing near ...
Why in that Springtime did I go away:
Was I too afraid of happiness, to stay?

VALUES

As children, our idea of death is but that of an ugly myth, whose story, like that of the ogre of "Jack and the Beanstalk," is something to shudder over, perhaps, in the telling and to forget when the tale is told. Every normal child is potentially immortal; and, as one of the immortals, he looks everywhere upon the world and sees nothing there that is not as living as he. For him, even the inanimate comes to life. He cannot comprehend death and will not believe in it though the evidence be set plainly before his eyes.

To the child, there is no death; it is not until we reach young manhood that we first begin to see that it may be possible. Possible, yes; but, in the normal course of events, still how almost infinitely remote like the Great Nebula of Orion. Its orbit will surely not close upon

ours for many, many years; and the years are so generous and so long.

In youth, we are so contemptuous of death even when we meet it. This is the secret of the young soldier, fearless in his teens. The call may come for others, but not for us; our time has not yet come. We stride softly, leisurely, along the path; softly and softly, too, Time steps by our side.

Softly and at leisure! Yet the day surely comes when we suddenly discover that we have come a very great distance and that our strides are as those of the seven league boots. How is this? Have we not said that the years are generous and long? Ah, but that was in our youth! The years have changed their tempo and we discover that we are altered with the change. Almost overnight we are filled with strange weaknesses that were not here but yesterday. The springtide of our childhood is gone, and the summer of our youth, and now the autumn of middle age has touched us with its first numbing frosts. We look again upon the world and we see that, like ourselves, it is more than half dead, with the other half in slow decay. Life is nothing but the yellowing twigs at the ends of the boughs. There is a storm in the offing, but it is still fairly distant. Nothing but the heat lightnings are yet to be seen, silently playing along the horizon beyond the tops of the far-off hills.

Middle age goes scurrying, a handful of yellow and scarlet leaves, and the white winter of old age, at length, stands before the gate and at the door. The storm that we have dreaded is upon us; it howls through the crannies and through the cracks. And now, that it is upon us, perversely enough, we scarcely dread it at all! We are suddenly very tired. We have seen all and have heard all that is to be seen or heard, and have tasted life to the full. And what is life but an old song that is sung with endless repetitions? Everything now is in complete reverse from childhood, and it is life that looms behind us like a myth and like an incredible dream. The storm passes, the hush of peace and of calm settles about us and a hand is reached to us, not that of the silly ogre of childhood nor that of the grim hunter of middle age, but the hand of an angel of mercy that folds us under her wings.

Why is it that we are always dying and being born? Why is it that we do not live forever, once and for all? And why is it that we have come when we have, and for what?

Life must be young and vigorous, as empty as an overturned cup; otherwise, it is of no avail. Youth is empty but age is filled, and the measure of its fullness is of but a few decades, not of eternity. If life were to be infinite in time, it must be infinite in capacity also in order that it never grow old. What is old age but a memory of the past, a receptacle too filled with the old to retain the new? Life is not infinite, but finite, because it is many. We come when we come because for the time we are the fittest; we go when we go because we have passed our best and already there crowds upon us one who is better. We come in our strength to leave our sons and our daughters stronger than we, not merely to hold our places but to gain better places, to mount slowly up to the Light. This is the goal to be reached. Nothing as yet has reached the goal, not even the gods; and, until we overtake them, not even the gods can arrive.

Death is merely the mechanism that empties us periodically of our outworn personalities and of our past, and renews our youth. They who would seek the fountain of youth must follow this road. We have often walked this way before and we shall often return. In this we persist. Does it grieve you to think that the ego or the personality does not also persist? But the ego is nothing in itself; it is merely a rainbow, the creation of immaterial light through material cloud. It is pleasant in part to remember, but in part also it is pleasant to forget; and, if we were to come into the world with a memory of the ages, we must be born ages old. Since each cannot contain all, life must be limited and individualized as time itself for us is circumscribed, that, in our day, freed from the maximum of distraction, we master the little we may, since, without eternity, we cannot master the whole. Life must be lived within narrow bounds; while death, upon the contrary, opens upon the general and the broad. Personality is of no value there.

The clock runs down, the universe runs down and is wound again. Eternally, there are spirit and matter and, infinitely greater than any of its parts, there is the Unity of All. Beyond personality, beyond the cycle of life and death and beyond the gods, this is that One that spins the atoms mysteriously like worlds in miniature through the complicated but ordered processes of unchanging law; this is that One that moves serenely through the star-sanded maze of illimitable space, setting the far-off galaxies awhirl about its path like motes of shining dust.

L.B.W.

GUILD MEETINGS Alfred J. Dewey

Our last meeting was indeed one in which to see the etcher's art. Mr. Bernhardt Wall, the well-known etcher of books on Lincoln, exhibited some eighty etchings done by him over a period of years that show his diversified tastes and interests. While many of these were done to illustrate the life of Lincoln, forty-two were from Mr. Wall's recent book on the Missions of California. Among these were those script or text plates, comparable to the early English engravures. Considering that this lettering is done backwards or in reverse, it seems impossible.

In his talk on "The Itch to Etch," Mr. Wall demonstrated very thoroughly the art of making an etching. He explained each step from "laying the ground" to cutting the design through the ground with the stylus, the acid bath, and the final pulling of the proof. He made the whole process look very simple.

"Without a thorough knowledge of drawing and of values," said Mr. Wall; "no one can do any form of art work at all. In etching, you not only must know drawing as well as value, you must have a feeling for line. By that I mean, your line not only must express delineation; but, more important, rhythm."

Following this demonstration, Mr. Wall called upon any in the audience who cared to, to try their hands at pulling a proof; and many responded.

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Mr. Claude W. Hippler, Director of Child Welfare in the Pasadena City Schools, will be the speaker at the February meeting of the Guild to be held on Friday evening, February 4, at the Wistaria Vine Gardens. As his subject, he is to speak on "Child Delinquency Must Be Met As It Is." His talk, however, will be an informal discussion of delinquency and some of its causes in relation to the problem as we have it today. He will attempt to answer the questions, "What can we do about it and What are we doing about it at the present time?" This meeting will be an open one, for the public generally.

Mr. Hippler has been with the Pasadena schools for the past twenty years, and for the past nine as Director of Child Welfare. Formerly, he was athletic coach at the Pasadena Junior College. He is the president of the Pasadena Kiwanis Club.

HORACE the guild mouse

this being the time of year as when everybody goes takin stock of all what they got if any and plannin for the future so i sez to mrs m we must sit down and check up on things to see where we are at. the mrs sez i done that all yesterday and found not a krum. lets get down to brass taks i sed so we can start with a clean bottom with no krums no titbits no nothin. this place sez mrs m has got to be the unkrumiest with alf down to 1 sandwitch a day the krums as he drops wood nut feed little nellie we could go to the nay boors i sed they are rich and eat plenty. that gives me a idear sez mrs m lets the hole of the fambily band together and visit each house oncet at a time and bring back all we can carry and hord it under the kitshun sink.

so that nite we all started out en mess to dorrs. it wuz a funny proceshun and the mrs m led the way. then came --

sammy and sandy patrishia and pat
dottie and danny with fanny and nat
doris and damon kittie and kate
elmer the slim one with a scar on his pate
winnie and wilferd carrie and cale
jonnie the fat one with a kink in his tale
frankie and olaf sally and alf
mopey the week one as sits by hisself
tillie and milly and bernie and bell
and amy and arnie what just raises h---
roslie and raimond katrinka and kress
for the little ones behind em i only cud gess
how the mrs ever named em i cant understand
if theyd cum when their called theyd all on em be grand
to name all our offsprings is a matter of work
i cud run on forever frum ruthie to wild billie burk
ex cetra i sez lets get on with our rush
to gather the krums afore they beet us with a whisk broom and a brush
we loaded each mouse with krums to the brink
and brot em all home to our own kitshun sink
and sat ther in wunder at the hord as we got
its the only way to do things i sez when things goes to pot.

the moril of this story is if its ever got wun
the unkrumiest place is krumy when u all get it dun.

OF ITALY Sgt. J. W. Moray

You would surely get a kick if you could see the typewriter I am typing this letter on. It is a German portable picked up during the campaign, a little the worse for wear but still manages to bang out most everything we want. Of course, at times it will act up a bit to show its stubborn ancestry.

As you have probably guessed by now, I am now in Italy, after my bout in North Africa. Well, another country, another language to try to figure out. We surely are seeing the world, of course not under the most ideal conditions, but still we are seeing it. Things look better up here than over in Africa. I can almost see the light again. I think now this thing will be over in the near future. I don't think thay can stand much more of the kind of pounding they're getting, especially from the air.

I had a pleasant evening the other night. I was invited to dinner by some French people who speak very good English. I met them when we first came over here last year, but hadn't seen them since. It was a very nice dinner, and believe it or not we had dry martinis. I had almost forgotten what they taste like. It has been a long time since Dad mixed a cocktail for me before dinner.

We had a grand Thanksgiving Day dinner, too, with turkey and all the fixings, and everybody enjoyed it. Some difference from last year in Tunisia.

Big news - we had a mess of Wacs land here recently. They surely have been getting quite a welcome from the soldiers. This certainly is a paradise for a homely girl. She can have her pick of the Army, and I don't mean maybe. They are being rushed off their feet.

Bad news - I had to leave Lea, my pup, behind when I left Africa, and I surely miss her a lot. She is still in the Army, though. We gave her to an ack-ack artillery outfit.

You ask what I would like you to send me. Well now I would like best a new pair of tank boots if you can send them to me. I would like also a good hunting knife if one is still available, something with a long blade and a bone handle if possible and a leather scabbard. It's one thing that all the boys want, is a good hunting knife. The socks that you sent come in quite handy right now as I change

them sometimes twice a day. They get so wet, and I have one of my beautiful colds now which I can't seem to shake off. If that isn't enough, I went and tore a ligament in my knee recently and the damn thing won't let me sleep or sit down for any length of time. I am already receiving Christmas packages by twos and threes here. I have received a total of twelve now up to this writing.

Well, I'm plenty homesick. I'm afraid I've been away from home too long. The best thing that the Army could do for these boys over here would be to let them go home for a while. I think they would find that they would have a better bunch of fighting men with a much higher morale for any future action which undoubtedly they will have to go into. I sure would like to see you and our new home. I have lived so long like a pig in the mud, I won't know how to act inside a house again.

BOOT CAMP A/C. John H. Coit

Kearns Koncentration Kamp -- Just got in and just had chow, and it was good. On the train we had nothing but Nazi rations, but this is more like real food. Now I am all settled down in our luxurious barracks, and will probably fall into a deep slumber at any time. We'll probably have nothing to do this afternoon, but we've been ordered to remain in barracks, so I think I will. As yet I don't know so much about Army life, but I do know that they have you rush like hell to some place and then stand and wait for an hour or more.

Another day done. This morning we got our equipment -- about 100 lbs. of it plus about 50 lbs. of shoes. This is the coldest place on earth. I always wear one pair of summer underwear and two pairs of winter. The wind is so bad that we're in Salt Lake City twice a day. In the morning it comes going south, and in the afternoon it returns going north. The camp is surrounded with snow-covered mountains. We had shots for smallpox, typhoid and tetanus, and I've been sick since. Our shots were given in the morning and we marched most of the afternoon. At 5:30 we stood retreat, where I and many others passed out.

One week shot -- Last Sunday our flight was put on

special detail hauling rocks all over the country in buckets. However, about 15 of us hid in a haystack and didn't work so very hard. Our flight is the biggest collection of rookies in the camp, so we do all the dirty work. But there is really a swell bunch of guys here, and we manage to have a good time. The food -- it's the most repulsive stuff you ever saw. Personally, I thrive on it. The weather -- cold and windy. I really like it here. We have it pretty easy. We live on practically nothing but rumors around here. I heard directly from a guy who got it straight that our barracks burned down today. But it is still here. Please send me a pocket dictionary before I become illiterate.

Well, I've been here long enough now to get a pass to leave the post; so, when I feel ambitious, I'll go into Salt Lake City, the only civilized place anywhere around here. Yesterday, I took a shower and changed clothes, and did I need it. I was so dirty that I'm going to make it a rule to wash more often.

It rained like hell here this afternoon while our flight was on a hike. Don't let anybody ever tell you that G.I. raincoats are any good, because after about a half an hour I was soaked all the way through. Please tell me how to get clothes clean with a bucket of water and soap. This evening I washed clothes, but they're all still dirty. This morning our flight had inspection for the first time. The inspectors were told in advance that we are the worst bunch of rookies in the squadron. Strange as it may seem, we all amazed the inspecting officer. Worst thing about this Army for me -- I don't like getting up early in the morning. We spend lots of time drilling, which bores me and everyone else. I think Army life is wonderful -- even at Kearns. We spend about half the time drilling and the rest of the time sleeping through lectures on first aid, military courtesy, camouflage, war gases, etc. I have learned to sleep in any position. These lectures are very beneficial.

It is Sunday night and I am stuffing myself with the best cookies in the world. No kidding, Mom, they are really good. We had a Memorial Day parade this morning. It rained most of the time, so we all stood at attention like a bunch of morons in the rain. I have finally caught Kearnsitis, and am therefore a good soldier. I have worn holes through the soles of my first pair of G.I. shoes already, which will give you some idea of how much I wander around this place. Yesterday we practiced beach head attack which is much like football but more rugged. The wind was blowing a gale and it was raining at the same time, which amounted to raining mud sideways.

THE WAKE OF THE PRAIRIE SCHOONER by Irene D. Paden. Illustrated with pen and ink drawings by the author. New York: The Macmillan Company. 514 pp. $3.00

"The Wake of the Prairie Schooner," beautifully written and very charmingly illustrated with pen and ink sketches by the author, Irene D. Paden, is neither a novel nor a mere travel book, as the prospective reader might imagine, but is a source book for the history of those American emigrant routes of 100 years ago into the Far West, known as the Oregon and the California Trails. At the same time, as well, it contains enough of the living history of those emigrants themselves, culled from the diaries of the men and women who followed those trails, to give the book a sparkling vitality throughout and to preserve it from becoming a mere dry catalogue of facts.

Mrs. Paden, with her husband, the geographer, and her son, Bill, have been in the habit for a number of years of spending their summer vacations together patiently and at leisure tracing out the intricate windings of these old trails. They have not been content to trace these routes in a general way from the comfort of the nearest modern highway; but, armed with maps, guidebooks, and with all the additional information they could acquire in advance, supplemented with such firsthand knowledge and directions as the natives could supply along the way, they made their day by day journey, often in an old mud-stained car, across lots, through farms, ranches and back country, following closely in the very wagon ruts of the emigrants themselves. Painstakingly and in detail they have worked out every section of these old trails and have recorded with precision every halting place, every ford, every happy or tragic spot where these emigrants passed. This they have accomplished not a bit too soon, for these ancient wagon ruts are already obliterated in many sections and are fast fading away, while the few old people who still remember where the trails once ran will soon be gone. Furnished with this source book anyone may now trace out these trails for himself.

These emigrant routes, known as the Oregon and the California Trails, were not just two parallel tracks across the wilderness. If that were all, they would be fairly easy to follow. Instead, they consisted of a great network of trails, with numerous and confusing branches, with many cutoffs, convergings and separations. Almost no two parties followed exactly the same set of tracks. It seemed as if each caravan that started out tried to improve upon the

routes of those who had gone before. Sometimes rhey succeeded; but oftener, while evading one difficulty, they got into worse. This, for example, was what happened to the Jayhawker party of Death Valley - they were trying to blaze a new cutoff. The Padens not only followed out all of the main routes; they also investigated and mapped all of the by-paths.

In the far 1840's, all of the old overland trails started out from the Missouri River. That was the jumping-off place, the line of the frontier of civilization. Once across the Missouri, they were in the Indian country and in trackless wilderness. The original Oregon Trail began at the frontier town of Independence, a few miles to the east of the modern Kansas City. This was also the starting point of the old Santa Fe Trail, and the Oregon Trail followed the Santa Fe a few miles and then turned northwest to the River Platte. At Independence, the emigrants were fitted out with covered wagons and ox or mule teams. In Making their way across the country, the lay of the rivers dictated their course, since, for the sake of the cattle and the mules, they must keep close to water and grass. The Platte runs nearly due east for a thousand miles to the Missouri, and its banks furnished the best route west to the Rockies. From the headwaters of the Platte, the emigrants followed the Sweetwater through the mountains and then crossed over the Continental Divide to the valley of the Green and on to the Snake River, and followed the Snake on to the Columbia. This was the original Oregon Trail. The California Trail was the same as far as the headwaters of the Snake River, where it branched off to the southwest along Goose Creek to the sources of the Humboldt and followed this river to the Carson Sink. It then crossed the Sierras in the vicinity of Lake Tahoe and came down into the great inland valley of California to Sutter's Fort where Sacremento now stands.

Besides Independence, there were other jumping-off places along the Missouri. One of these was St. Joseph, Missouri, further north. The trail from there had the advantage of being shorter than that from Independence. Then there was the so-called "Mormon Trail" which started out from Omaha, Nebraska, and followed the north bank of the Platte while the others followed the south bank. All these trails converged to one at the Sweetwater; but, beyond the Divide, the Mormon Trail again split off down the valley of the Green and, by way of old Fort Bridger, crossed over the Washoe Mountains to the Great Salt Lake. Some of the California emigrants, also, sometimes took this road, but they found the country between the Great Salt Lake and the Humboldt River an all but imapssible desert.

Long months were consumed by the early pioneers in their slow, their almost interminable crawl across the vast unfriendly plains and over those fearful mountain ranges. Every creek, every stream, every river had to be forded at the risk of life; every mountain, every gorge and canyon had to be crossed somehow with cumberous wagons where the trail had first to be cleared. Where the emigrants passed, they left grave after lonely grave beside the wagon ruts to mark their way. In addition to the endless hardships imposed upon them by the nature of the country itself, in addition to frequent deaths from accidents and from drownings at the fords, they died of cholera, they were slain from ambush by hostile Indians, or their oxen were slain or were stolen and they were left afoot in the desert to die of hunger and thirst. Sometimes they went mad and killed each other or themselves; sometimes they started out upon the trail too late in the season and the winter overtook them before they could reach safety. This last, for example, was the tragic end that came to the Donner party when almost within sight of their goal. These evils and more they endured; yet, they came through in numbers, men, women and children. Nothing could really stop them. And within the span of one generation thay had carved for the Union out of this wilderness two new states, Oregon and California.

There was a voice in the wind that came to their door and there was a trail that beckoned unto the ends of the earth. Young men and young women, in the day of their strength, they listened to the cry of the wind and to the call of the road. Thus it was that, in the hour of dawn, they set their hands to their burdens and their feet upon the trail.

Gradually, they pushed on through familiar country into lands that were strange. Mountains, blue lakes and blue rivers, they crossed them all; wide valley after mist-clearing valley opened beyond and beyond. When they turned into the sun, no craft stood before them; when they trod out that slumbering plain, no homestead was seen. Little by little they panetrated into the unexplored, into the undiscovered. Cloud-mantled peaks, volcanic cones, towered afar against the heavens; canyons, wild in their beauty, scored the roll of the land. Springtime passed, and the summer, and, on an autumn day, barren hills to fertile strands foliage-starred into distance in the yellowing sun. There, at peace with the world, they were beyond need and beyond desire. And there, by the deep blue bend of a singing river, they built their homes, their future city, in a setting of natural gardens, autumnal scarlet and gold.

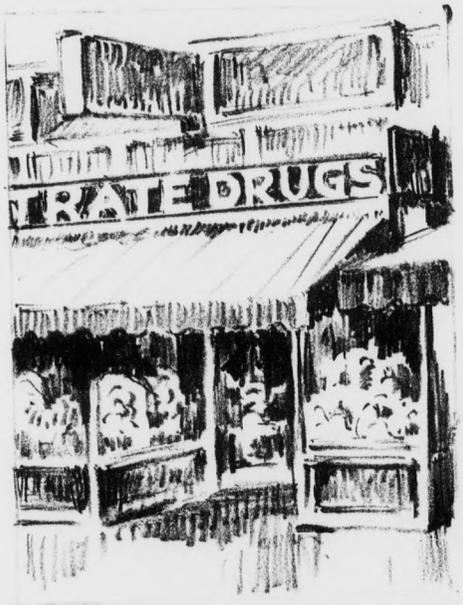
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